

While awaiting some kind of budget clarity from the State, the Select Board focused on other issues.

### **Keepers of the Public Way**

The Select Board devoted nearly one full meeting to public way issues. DPW Superintendent Guilford Mooring presented a number of proposals to us:

- Design plans for the section of North Pleasant Street in front of the Food for Thought bookstore block, which will level that sloping sidewalk and feature a stone wall, similar to the Zanna block.
- Changes for Cottage Street, limiting parking to one side per section, to allow better emergency vehicle access.
- New requirements for permitting trenches, proposing that the DPW be designated the Town's trench permitting authority, and establishing a fee for the permit.
- Installation of temporary closures blocking one lane each at the north and south sides of Fearing Street intersections with Lincoln and Sunset Avenues, as a traffic calming test. These would be installed for four weeks at the beginning of the school year in the fall, with traffic counters in surrounding locations to measure resulting impacts.

The Select Board considered and approved all of these proposals. Additionally, we established a process and timeline for completing committee review and public comment on a draft town-wide traffic calming policy by the end of June, with a recommendation or status report due back to us in July.

### **Community Concerns**

East Pleasant Street neighbors brought concerns to the Select Board about the Town's bylaw enforcement at rental properties and its responsiveness to complaints on that issue. Town staff provided updates on the specific properties at issue and outlined plans for improving communication and addressing problematic properties. The Select Board will receive progress reports on these issues.

The Executive Director of ACTV addressed the Select Board about a recent spate of meeting broadcast problems, and provided information about ongoing upgrades and improvements.

### **The Budget**

With details still pending on State aid, Federal stimulus, and the potential for new revenue from local-option taxes, the FY10 budget picture is murky. Seeking maximum time to clarify these issues, the Select Board approved structuring the Annual Town Meeting Warrant with non-budget articles at the beginning, followed by adjournment until June 1<sup>st</sup>, when budget consideration would begin.

To inform future budget recommendations and for a fuller picture of cost trends, the Select Board requested a report on total employee compensation over the last 10 years. The Schools and Libraries also support the request, and want comparable data across all budgets, so the report specifics will be determined by a subcommittee of the Budget Coordinating Group after Town Meeting.

### **Involvement in Contracts**

The Select Board has been considering how to have a role in collective bargaining negotiations, and has decided to do so through information updates in Executive Session. The intent is for the Select Board to

be kept apprised of bargaining strategies and progress, and to have the opportunity to offer feedback. One such update on negotiations with the Firefighters Union has since taken place.

Consideration of the collective bargaining issue brought attention to details in the Amherst Town Government Act about the Select Board reviewing all grants with future budget implications. This has not been an active practice recently, but will be going forward. The Town Manager will now inform the Select Board about such grants during the planning stage. This will give the Select Board and the public greater visibility in to the grant process and its effect on future spending obligations.

### **Committees**

Much attention was paid to committees this month. The charge for the new Local Historic District Study Committee was revised, and seven members were appointed. Three appointments were also made to other committees. We are looking at how to implement the Select Board's recent decision to eliminate term limits and automatic reappointments, and how that affects terms ending June 30<sup>th</sup>. We are also considering the efficacy of our rotating committee appointment clerk model.

The Select Board is renewing emphasis on members attending meetings of committees to which we are liaisons, and we are revising policy language to reflect that. Liaison reports have been given a higher priority on our meeting agendas. In addition to committee meetings, members attended and reported on regional meetings about legislative, school budget and veterans' services issues.

### **Letters of Support, Thanks and Welcome**

The Select Board sent letters to: the President and Federal legislators, in support of National single-payer health care; the Governor and State legislators, in support of more equitable distribution of Federal stimulus funds for transportation projects; the former co-Superintendents, thanking them for their service to our schools; and the newly-selected Superintendent, offering welcome and congratulations.

### **Licenses**

We approved the seasonal liquor license for Cherry Hill Golf Course and two taxi driver licenses.

### **Reports from the Town Manager**

The Town Manager informed and updated the Select Board about outreach activities with the community, UMass and the colleges; pursuit of economic development opportunities; and pursuit of cost reduction opportunities through regionalization and other alternatives to full-funding of services with General Fund revenue. He also reported on administrative issues including search plans for new Police and Fire Chiefs; creation of an Environmental Scientist position; employee budget meetings; and development of a policy for distributing lawsuit proceeds for emergency shelter and fuel assistance.